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Book Reviews

The Iliad of Homer. Translated into English Hexameter Verse
by PRENTISS CUMMINGS. 2 vols. Boston: Little, Brown
& Co., 1910. Pp. xliv+529. \$3 net.

These two volumes contain the translation of an abridgment of the *Iliad*. The portion translated comprises about one-half of the *Iliad* and includes all of the main story and nearly all of the most celebrated passages.

Much of the Introduction of forty-four pages is elementary in character and designed to explain to the novice matters which need explanation in order to a proper understanding of the poem. Such are the myths relating to the marriage of the hero's parents, Peleus and Thetis, the probability of a Trojan war such as the *Iliad* describes, the lack of unity in the poem and reasons for it, and the question of authorship.

The translator is of the opinion that "at least three great authors" are responsible for the *Iliad* as we now have it. They may be designated as "Homer of the Wrath," the author of the relevant parts of the first, eleventh, sixteenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-second books; the "Trojan Homer," author of the books relating to the Trojans, especially Hector; The "Homer of the *Iliad*" who added much to the works of his predecessors. The last-named "Homer" is also thought to be the author of the twenty-fourth book of the *Odyssey* and to have made interpolations in other books of that poem also. These views the translator accepts from advanced Homeric students, but he is convinced of their correctness from his literary feeling. As he says, "In the long task of trying to render the *Iliad* into readable English hexameters I have felt a sort of personal intimacy for the author, and in the parts named have felt that I was in contact with a different mind. . . . This third author has marked personal characteristics, not to mention style; he had a keen sense of humor wherein (using the word in its ordinary sense) his predecessors were lacking; and whereas they were always serious, his vein is much lighter, and he had a lighter fancy and a lighter poetic touch."

Our author has translated practically all that he attributes to the first and second Homers and the best of the third Homer's work.

Rules for the pronunciation of proper names are given. More than half of the Introduction is concerned with the hexameter verse which has been used in the translation. It is surprising to learn that "forty attempts at hexameter translation of the *Iliad*, mostly of short passages, have appeared in print." Recognizing the fact that these translations were not satisfactory, Mr. Cummings more than twenty years ago began to study the difficulties

of the hexameter verse. A busy life, with many long interruptions from literary work, has not prevented his translating much more of the *Iliad* than is included in these volumes. With commendable modesty, he does not claim to have solved the problem of rendering Homer adequately into English hexameter verse. But his industry and study of the problem of translation deserve strong praise. He makes valuable suggestions to any who would follow him. Future translators of Homer should not fail to avail themselves of Mr. Cummings' suggestions as stated in the introduction to these volumes.

It is not possible in limited space to give an adequate idea of the merits of the translation. Mr. Cummings agrees with Matthew Arnold that the difficulties of the hexameter verse could in time be so far overcome as to produce a version better than is possible in any other meter. But he admits that these difficulties are great and perplexing. However, his belief is that "the English-speaking races will never have in their own tongue a real reproduction of Homer in any other meter." Time alone will tell. If a real reproduction of Homer in hexameter should some time appear, will there be many who would take the time to read it? Perhaps, if there is meantime a new revival of love for ancient literature. The genius who achieves the stupendous task of the real reproduction of Homer in English hexameter will deserve undying fame, and let us hope that he gets it.

Meantime the reader may be interested in comparing a few lines of Mr. Cummings' translation of a famous passage with the renderings of others. So the following are quoted from the close of the eighth book. Mr. Cummings translates:

E'en as the stars in her train with the moon as she walketh in splendor
Blaze forth bright in the heavens on nights when the welkin is breathless—
Nights when the mountain tops, their jutting cliffs, and the valleys
All are disclosed to the eye, and above them the fathomless ether
Opens to star after star, and glad is the heart of the shepherd:
Such and so many the fires 'twixt the ships and the stream of the Xanthos
Kept ablaze by the Trojans in front of the darkening city.
Over the plain were burning a thousand fires, and beside them
Each sat fifty men in the firelight glare; and the horses,
Champing their fodder and barley white, and instant for action,
Stood by the chariot-side and awaited the glory of morning.

Lord Derby renders thus:

As when in heav'n, around the glitt'ring moon
The stars shine bright amid the breathless air;
And ev'ry crag and ev'ry jutting peak
Stands boldly forth, and ev'ry forest glade;
Ev'n to the gates of Heav'n is opened wide
The boundless sky; shines each particular star
Distinct; joy fills the gazing shepherd's heart.

So bright, so thickly scatter'd o'er the plain
 Before the walls of Troy, between the ships
 And Xanthus' stream, the Trojan watch fires blaz'd.
 A thousand fires burnt brightly; and round each
 Sat fifty warriors in the ruddy glare;
 With store of provender before them laid,
 Barley and rye, the tether'd horses stood
 Beside the cars, and waited for the morn.

Tennyson translates as follows:

As when in heaven the stars about the moon
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars
 Shine and the shepherd gladdens in his heart:
 So many a fire between the ships and stream
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
 A thousand on the plain; and close by each
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
 And champing golden grain, the horses stood
 Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.

English readers who desire to know the main events of the *Iliad* will find these volumes useful.

C. F. C.

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Geschichte der römischen Literatur. Von W. S. TEUFFEL. Sechste Auflage, neu bearbeitet von WILHELM KROLL und FRANZ SKUTSCH. Zweiter Band, "Die Literatur von 31 vor Chr. bis 96 nach Chr." Leipzig: Teubner, 1910. Pp. 6+348. M. 6.

The already well-known and established character of this "standard" book of reference makes it unnecessary to speak at any length in this place of its new edition, in which the editorial work so carefully bestowed upon the fifth edition by the late Ludwig Schwabe is taken up by two well-known scholars with the co-operation of three others. The work on the second volume, the first to appear in the sixth edition, is mainly done by Professor Kroll. In general plan, scope, aspect, and even typography the new edition does not differ from its predecessor, but the new editor remarks that the overwhelming amount of recently published literature makes it impossible to include in the articles any complete bibliography. References as far as possible to articles in Bursian's *Jahresbericht* do much toward filling the gaps, though it is sometimes not easy to see on just what principle the selection of the other bibli-